

VZCZCXRO2325
OO RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #0857/01 2021115
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 211115Z JUL 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4124
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0093
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0330
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0144
RUEHSUN/USUN ROME IT

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KHARTOUM 000857

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NSC FOR MGAVIN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SE GRATION VISITS KALMA CAMP AND MEETS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY
AND ETHNIC LEADERS

Summary

¶1. (U) During July 17-18, U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration traveled to South Darfur to review the humanitarian situation in Kalma and Kass internally-displaced person (IDP) camps and meet with Darfuri civil society and ethnic leaders. A report of Gration's trip to Kass will be provided via septel.

¶2. (U) Urging Kalma camp leaders and civil society representatives to look toward the future, SE Gration emphasized the importance of engagement in the peace process to find lasting solutions to the Darfur crisis. During Gration's meetings with the South Darfur Wali Ali Mahmoud Mohamed (governor) and Dr. Farah Mustafa Abdullah the Deputy Wali, both emphasized that the security situation in South Darfur has stabilized, and that the Sudanese government's relationship with IDPs is positive, despite reports to the contrary. However, the Special Envoy's visit to Kalma camp revealed frustrated IDPs and empty clinics. The Government of Sudan's (GOS) delay in allowing existing international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to work in Kalma, and the IDPs' refusal until very recently to allow the latter to do so, are the causes of most of these problems. In meetings with the humanitarian community, tribal leaders, and civil society representatives, SE Gration emphasized the importance of unifying disparate movements and noted progress in Sudanese government commitment to peace and facilitating assistance in Darfur. End summary.

Wali and Deputy Wali: Move Along, Nothing to See Here

¶3. (SBU) On July 17 and 18, Special Envoy (SE) Gration made his first visit to South Darfur, including trips to Kalma and Kass and meetings in Nyala, including courtesy calls with the Deputy Wali (governor) and Wali. The Deputy Wali, who wields the real power in South Darfur's government, claimed the situation there is stable. He said most armed opposition groups have begun to align themselves with the government, and that IDPs have started to return to their villages due to improvements in security. [Note: The Wali explained ex-SLA/AW movement members have taken refuge in Kalma camps, which explains the rhetoric of conditions and demands they make for peace.] The Deputy Wali stated that the government has been able to fill gaps following the expulsions of international

NGOs through partnership with national NGOs. However, the Deputy Wali did not repeat his late March charges that the expelled NGO workers were spies and thieves seeking to exploit the problems of Darfur. Instead, he praised USAID, UN agencies, and the remaining NGOs for their support for the Darfuri people. He added the GOS has recently signed technical agreements (TAs) with three international NGOs to work in Kalma camp. The Wali later echoed this message.

14. (U) SE Gration underscored the importance of the peace process in Doha, noting there will never be a lasting and durable peace in Darfur until all factions unite behind a single platform. He noted U.S. efforts to that end starting with SLA/AW and SLA/Unity in the coming week in Chad. The SE stressed that the USG's primary concern is for the next generation of Darfuris. For this reason, it is crucial to resolve security problems that keep IDPs in camps. He commended the South Darfur government for its recent efforts to support NGOs and UN agencies. However, he emphasized that the humanitarian community must have greater access to camps such as Kalma, and that there is room for improvement in the relationship between the GOS and the humanitarian community.

15. (SBU) The Deputy Wali replied that the solution would be to provide health, water, and education services in returnee areas now offered in IDP camps. SE Gration said the USG will work with the GOS to bring such services to places of voluntary return, but that the prerequisites for such returns include respect for IDP human rights and adequate security for returnees. The SE also stated that organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) need to be a part of the voluntary return process. Deputy Wali expressed appreciation for U.S. support for returns. He said the GOS "continues to dialogue" with IOM based on its country

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agreement, and plans to sign a technical agreement with IOM soon. [Note: IOM has a valid 2004 memorandum of understanding with the GOS on verification of population movements. It does not require a technical agreement with the GOS under Sudanese law. End note.] SE Gration also raised the issue of disconnects between federal-level agreements on the humanitarian assistance and state-level implementation, especially travel notification.

Kalma Sheikhs: What Future?

16. (U) During his meeting with sheikhs (IDP leaders), youth leaders, and women's representatives in Kalma, the SE asked what the international community could do to assist in unifying the various rebel movements and facilitating voluntary returns by IDPs to their villages. He said he wanted to hear the sheikhs discuss the future rather than the past. However, the sheikhs provided a long litany of past injustices. They said their villages are now occupied by other ethnic groups. The sheikhs complained there was no security for IDPs. Problems in Kalma camp continue: women are raped, homes are looted and burned, and IDPs are threatened, tortured, and killed. The sheikhs said they have no confidence in the capacity of the UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur's (UNAMID) to provide security. Until the janjaweed are disarmed, they asserted, it is impossible for IDPs to return home. For the sheikhs, Paris-based Fur leader Abdul Wahid (head of the Sudan Liberation Army/Wahid faction) is the only one who represents their interests. However, one sheikh admitted that the IDPs would replace Abdul Wahid if he failed to help them.

17. (SBU) The sheikhs said NGO expulsions had resulted in women dying in childbirth and led to the deaths of more than 250 children due to poor medical care [Note: This number has not been confirmed.] The sheikhs claimed the GOS had allowed an existing international NGO to begin work in Kalma only in anticipation of the SE's arrival. SE Gration expressed disappointment with the sheikhs' negative outlook on the situation in Darfur. He said IDPs should be focused on Darfur's future and not its past. SE Gration noted that in his meeting with Abdul Wahid in Paris, the latter had refused to engage in the Doha negotiations. He called on the IDPs to work together for peace and the future of their children. He added he was working to reduce tensions between Chad and Sudan to increase regional

security.

Kalma Services: Gaps "Filled" But Clinics Empty

¶18. (SBU) The day before SE Gration arrived at Kalma, USAID partner International Medical Corps (IMC) had received a signed TA to begin health services at the former International Rescue Committee (IRC) clinic, after nearly three months of having sought approval from the GOS. IMC staff noted that the IDPs themselves had initially refused to allow IMC to work in Kalma. The IDPs had been encouraged to take this position in the vain hope that expelled NGO IRC workers would be allowed to return. However, the IDPs said they were now looking forward to IMC's filling the gap left by IRC's expulsion. They spoke of the need for basic medical care, mental health, rape treatment, health education, and other services. IDP midwives and other former IRC workers said they maintained the clinic as long as possible, using their own severance payments to buy supplies. They added the IRC medicines had run out. It was urgent to restore services with the onset of the rainy season, when diseases increase.

¶19. (U) The SE toured the 40-bed former IRC clinic that had only one patient, a young man nearing death from diabetes-related complications. The SE was told the clinic lacks the medicines and trained staff to save the young man's life.

¶10. (SBU) IMC staff informed SE Gration that they plan to re-start clinic operations within a week. However, they added the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) had told them they could recruit only former IRC staff members living in the camp. Hiring ex-IRC staff located outside Kalma would require their going through HAC

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hiring procedures, which can take up to six months. Gration said he would raise this issue at senior levels to ensure a speedy resolution.

UNAMID: Improved Security; Concerning Hostage-Taking Trends

¶11. (SBU) UNAMID briefed the SE on the current security environment in South Darfur. Briefers noted improvements during the past year, but said there had also been recent NGO staff hostage-taking. UNAMID reported a decline in carjacking since 2008 due in part to the March 4 NGO expulsions resulting in fewer high value vehicles on Darfur roads. In addition, nighttime curfews forbidding use of UNAMID targeted vehicles and use by NGOs of unostentatious rental vehicles had also contributed to the decline.

¶12. (U) UNAMID staff said there were small-scale returns including for seasonal farming and limited permanent returns. IDPs complained of a lack of security, and said they would return if their areas of origin were safe again. The SE described his discussions on corridors of security to allow IDPs to return to certain locations secured by UNAMID and/or the GOS. He said the USG is exploring the possibility of having NGOs provide services outside of, rather than inside, camps and provide incentives for peace.

Tribal Leaders and Civil Society: Impunity and Insecurity Continues

¶13. (SBU) The SE also met with Arab and non-Arab tribal leaders, followed by a meeting with civil society representatives. Both groups of tribal leaders were generally consistent in their messaging, noting that they still have serious concerns with the overall security and political situation in Darfur. Tribal leaders also noted that "selected killings" are still taking place, with people from various ethnic groups being detained and murdered.

¶14. (SBU) Arab leaders said they had been exploited by the GOS and neglected by the international community. They added the GOS should stop arming Arab tribes. SE Gration said all Arab factions,

including those originally armed by the GOS, should now be engaged in the peace process.

¶15. (SBU) Echoing concerns raised by Arab tribal leaders, several non-Arab representatives said the GOS had detained, and in some cases killed, members of tribes who had tried to unify those in the opposition. The leaders added the GOS was intent on creating divisions rather than unity. Many in the group called for justice in trying those who committed atrocities in Darfur.

¶16. (SBU) SE Gration told both groups that "Darfur must take control of its future," but could count on the USG for support. Consistent with his message to the sheikhs in Kalma, he told the tribal leaders to unify and have a voice at the negotiating table.

¶17. (SBU) Finally, the SE met with civil society members from various organizations in Darfur, including those from the Darfur Forum, a lawyers' union, academia, women's groups, and Nyala-based NGOs. In a long and rather contentious session, group members disparaged each others' knowledge of topics ranging from peace negotiations, training, and compensation issues. The session underscored the need of such groups to find common ground in arriving at joint positions. The SE said the U.S. would be willing to support serious civil society initiatives that could be factored into the Doha process. The groups all agreed on one point: they said UNAMID was not adequately providing protection in Darfur. They also expressed disappointment that women were not, in their view, represented in the Doha negotiations.

Humanitarian Community: Two Realities at Work

¶18. (SBU) During a meeting with NGO and UN representatives, NGOs noted that although significant progress has been made in addressing

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the gaps left by the expulsions, the quality of programming has been compromised. Agencies noted that the intense focus on gap-filling has left many ignoring the gaps that existed prior to the expulsions.

¶19. (SBU) SE Gration agreed that gaps still exist, but stressed that in the past 100 days there had been progress in filling them. He also noted that the anti-NGO rhetoric had stopped and government cooperation had improved. NGOs replied that while cooperation might be better at the Khartoum-level, federal agreements had often not resulted in implementation at the field-level, and the "reality (in the field) is different than what you're hearing at the top". Many NGOs noted ongoing problems with access. SE Gration asked NGOs to provide specific details of impediments that he could raise directly with the GOS on their behalf.

Comment

¶20. (U) SE Gration's message throughout his meetings with IDP leaders, civil society members, and NGO and UN representatives remained consistent. He stressed that he wants to be a partner with and advocate for civil society and NGOs in helping to improve the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in Darfur. In exchange, Gration encouraged all local Darfuris, in civil society and in the camps, to commit to having their collective voices heard as part of the Darfur peace process so that their interests and concerns are ultimately reflected in any lasting peace agreement.

¶21. The Special Envoy approved this cable prior to his departure from Sudan.

WHITEHEAD